



For immediate release – Monday, February 7, 2011

EPA takes first step toward protecting Bristol Bay, announces scientific assessment of watershed

Anchorage – Alaska Natives, the commercial fishing industry and sportsmen applauded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's announcement today to conduct a scientific assessment of the Bristol Bay watershed.

"Today's announcement from the EPA is a great first step toward protecting Bristol Bay from the dangers of Pebble Mine," said **Tim Bristol**, Director of Trout Unlimited's Alaska Program. "We are pleased the EPA is doing the right thing by starting a public process and gathering scientific data about how mining would have an impact on the health and environment of Bristol Bay."

The proposed Pebble Mine could mean the devastation of a 40,000-square-mile wetland – about the same size as Kentucky. Mining in Bristol Bay also puts at risk the world's largest sockeye salmon run, as well as the thousands of jobs associated with this \$450 million-a-year fishery.

In 2010, nine federally-recognized Bristol Bay tribes petitioned the EPA to use its authority under the section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to protect Bristol Bay. On Monday, the EPA responded to this request, and noted that Bristol Bay "may be the last major watershed in North America that produces historic numbers of wild salmon." The full EPA press release is here:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/0/8c1e5dd5d170ad99852578300067d3b3?OpenDocument>

"We look forward to working with the EPA during the next several months," said **Brian Kraft**, the owner of the Alaska Sportsman's Lodge and Alaska Sportsmen's Bear Trail Lodge. "This is just the sort of science-based process we're looking for in Alaska, to understand how we can protect Bristol Bay, the salmon population, its fishing industry and the thousands of American jobs it supports."

Today's announcement begins a public process to determine the effects of large-scale development in Bristol Bay, primarily in the Nushagak and Kvichak watersheds.

The process initiates scientific review, tribal consultation, federal and state agency participation, as well as public and industry input.

"As an Alaska Native, a commercial fisherman and a resident of the Bristol Bay region, I commend the EPA for taking this important first step in a process that will protect my family's livelihood and our way of life," said **Everett Thompson**, a Bristol Bay fisherman. "Today's response is a victory for Alaskans."

Trout Unlimited, a non-profit dedicated to the conservation of freshwater streams, rivers, and habitat for trout, salmon and other aquatic species, is working with an unprecedented coalition to protect Bristol Bay from the dangers of mining. This diverse effort brings together Native Alaskans, the commercial fishing industry, the sports fishing industry and tourism-related businesses.

Bristol Bay is:

- A 40,000-square mile wetland with nine major rivers
- Home of the world's largest sockeye salmon run
- Host to one of North America's leading king salmon populations
- The center of a \$450 million-a-year fishing industry
- One of the last untouched areas on the planet

Pebble Mine would:

- Create an open-pit mine up to two miles wide and 1,700 feet deep
- Dig an underground mine of a similar scale
- Dump up to 10 billion tons of perpetually toxic mine waste in the heart of the Bristol Bay watershed
- Be operated by and profit two foreign companies with a poor environmental record
- Potentially destroy salmon runs, other fishes, habitat, wildlife and the overall beauty of this productive and wild area

To find out more about Trout Unlimited's efforts, see www.SaveBristolBay.org

For more information, contact:

Lesley Rogers, (206) 334-1483 or lesleyr@strategies360.com
David Shurtleff, (907) 230-2368 or DavidS@strategies.com